



Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel

Your Residential Utility Consumer Advocate

CONSUMERS' FACT SHEET

Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel

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UTILITY ASSISTANCE FOR MILITARY FAMILIES



Of the many things to be arranged before leaving for active military duty, utilities may be forgotten. But not making arrangements can cause a financial hardship for the families of military personnel. Some Ohio utilities have plans that can assist families who lose an income because a member of their household is away on active duty. While most utility companies will work with consumers in this situation to make payment arrangements on a case-by-case basis, some utility companies have established special programs to assist military personnel and their families.

Electric

American Electric Power (AEP) does not have an assistance program specifically for military families; however, AEP will waive the minimum payment amount for their Ohio Neighbor to Neighbor for veterans and active military.

The Neighbor to Neighbor program allows low-income AEP Ohio customers to receive a grant applied directly to their account, which prevents disconnection. In order to qualify for the program, the customer's income must be below 250 percent of the Federal Poverty Income Guidelines. The customer must also have made a minimum payment of \$150 within the past 90 days (waived for military families) and have a minimum account balance of \$100.

AEP accepts applications for the program from October 1 to April 30 each year.

Duke Energy Ohio has a Military Deferred Payment Program available for soldiers (or their dependents) on a case-by-case basis. To be eligible, proof of deployment is required. A copy of the customer's deployment papers, account number and phone number can be faxed to (513) 629-5870. The assistance provided by the program is limited to the household where military personnel reside. Benefits of the program may include suspension of payment requirements for 60 days, waiving late charges and/or security deposits, the establishment of a flexible payment program for no more than 12 months and/or the postponement of disconnection. This program is available for both electric and natural gas services provided by Duke.

FirstEnergy gives special consideration to military families by establishing payment arrangements for those who have a soldier deployed on active duty. The arrangements can range from no payments to partial payments depending on the situation. FirstEnergy also will block the account from being disconnected for nonpayment.

In addition, FirstEnergy offers a Community Connections Program for

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The Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel (OCC), the residential utility consumer advocate, represents the interests of 4.5 million households in proceedings before state and federal regulators and in the courts.

The state agency also educates consumers about electric, natural gas, telephone and water issues.

For more information, please visit the OCC website at www.occ.ohio.gov.



The Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel is an equal opportunity employer and provider of services.

its customers who have a member of the household on active duty. This program provides the following free services:

- ▶ Electrical upgrades;
- ▶ Installation of compact fluorescent light bulbs;
- ▶ Replacement of inefficient refrigerators, freezers and electric stoves; and
- ▶ Roof repairs or replacements.

To be eligible, the household must be a FirstEnergy customer and include one of the following:

- ▶ An active duty serviceman, servicewoman or spouse;
- ▶ Guardian(s) of the children of an active duty serviceman, servicewoman; or
- ▶ A dependent family member of an active duty serviceman or servicewoman.

FirstEnergy customers can call toll free 1-800-686-3421 for more information.

Natural Gas

Columbia Gas of Ohio will delay collection on the accounts of active military personnel for 12 months. Upon return from active duty, the customer will receive a 12-month payment plan.

Vectren Energy Delivery of Ohio

provides assistance to military families on a case-by-case basis. Documentation of active military duty is required. Once the customer reports his or her deployment, Vectren will work with the customer to assess what types of assistance are necessary.

Vectren will waive late payment fees and create payment arrangements. Vectren also can protect the accounts of customers or families with a household member on active duty from being disconnected for nonpayment.

Telephone

Windstream will waive one-time charges, such as reconnection and disconnection fees, for military personnel who disconnect and/or reconnect their service due to military deployment.

Windstream will work to create extended payment arrangements. It will also reserve the customer's phone number and email address for up to three years while the customer is on active duty.

Other Resources

If your utility companies are not listed here, the OCC recommends contacting them to make payment arrangements or to ask that fees be dropped.

